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with in favor of curtains—a feature that may commend itself to some of our readers. The design for a bookcase is somewhat novel and picturesque. In the centre of the upper part is a cupboard decorated either in color or by inlaying. At each side of this cupboard there is space for two rows of books. Below the slab are two larger cupboards, the door of each being divided into three vertical panels. The central panel of the three is decorated, while the side panels are divided by horizontal bands into a series of compartments, in each of which occurs the name of some great author. The work has many merits and is worthy of careful consideration.

ART IN COMMON THINGS.

IN the Italian Court of the Museum at South Kensington stands a glass case enclosing five or six objects of the most lavish artistic ornamentation. These objects are carefully protected from irreverent touch and shut away as jealously from moth and rust and dust as any Venetian glass or carved ivory in the whole collection; they cost the nation a thousand dollars or more, and yet they are only bellows! It is rather curious that in a cold country like England the only artistic examples of these fire-quickening household utensils, exhibited in the National Museum, have come, as they did, from warmer Italy. Bellows are certainly very little used in Italy nowadays, a straw or feather fan of most primitive fashion serving to ignite "scaldini" and encourage fagots to blaze from Naples to Milan, while in England bellows are constantly in use from John o' Groat's House to Land's End. These facts serve to emphasize the other fact that art in the sixteenth century in the country of the Renaissance found nothing too mean or low to be touched by its idealizing fingers.

Bellows are of very ancient origin and have figured somewhat in art, although, naturally, not as central fig-

ures. Viollet-le-Duc calls attention to a pair sculptured upon the capital of a column of an abbey church of the early twelfth century, where the form is almost

elongated and more heart-shaped, and they were certainly employed to stimulate the blaze, as one may see by still another illustration in the "Dictionnaire" of

Viollet-le-Duc. In the fifteenth century they became general household utensils, hanging beside the monumental chimney-pieces of castles as well as by the humble ones of cots. Their shapes were still unchanged, and whatever decoration they had was flat and unobtrusive. They were often richly gilded, and elaborately garnished with ornamental nails, and their leathers were artistically chiselled. During this century, in fact, commenced their ornamental history and that artistic embellishment which afterward made them almost too ponderous for a delicate hand to lift, and finally put several under glass in South Kensington as rare objects of art.

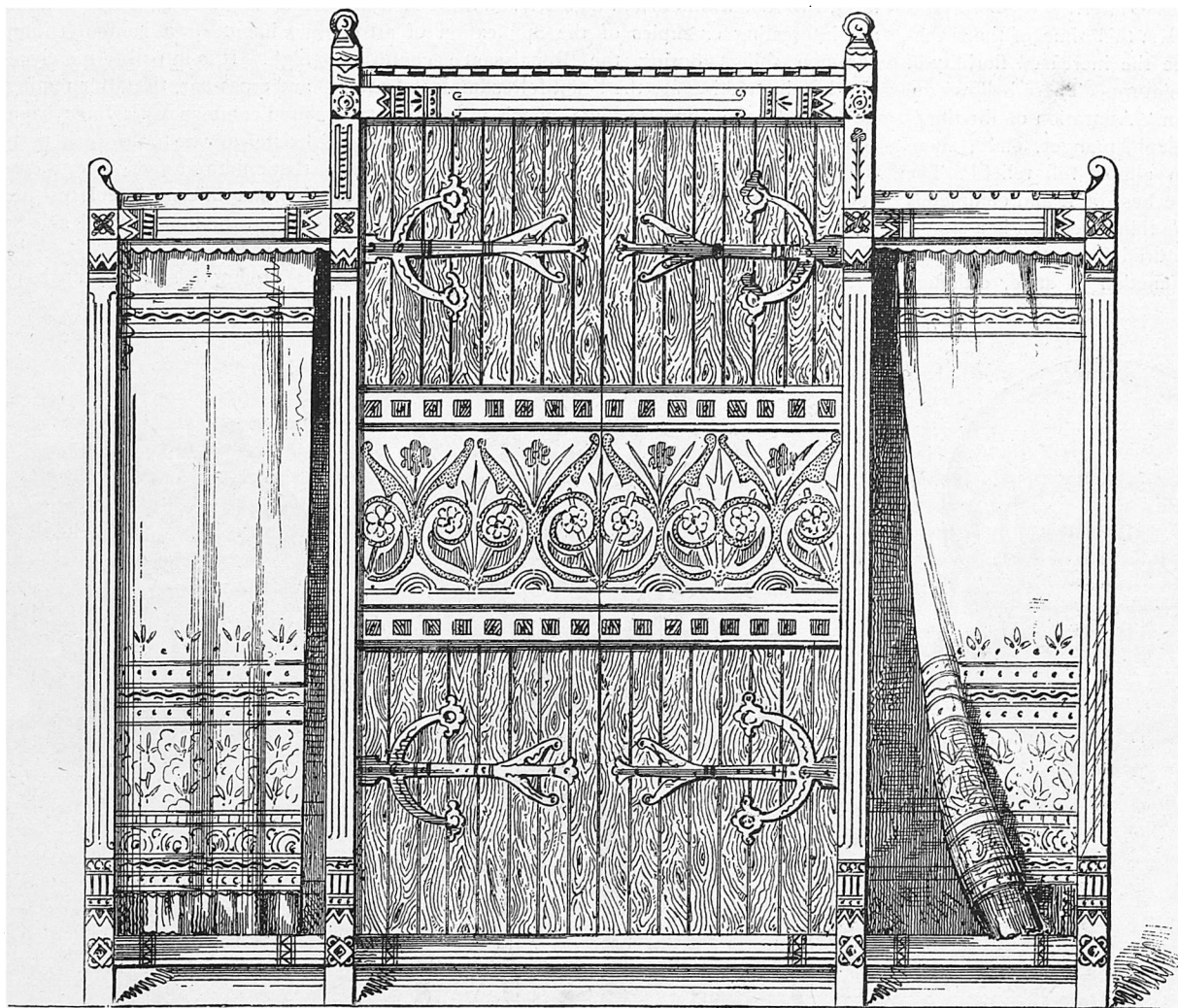
In looking from the illustrations of the "Dictionnaire" to the South Kensington collection one can see the progress of the decorative idea toward its own decadence, even upon bellows. In the early fifteenth century pair, illustrated by

Viollet-le-Duc, the form is slender and fine, the surfaces flat planes, untortured by the elegant decorations, which are subordinate to the object instead of

tyrannizing over it, as they do in some of the seventeenth century ones of the museum. In some of the latter the simple contour is absolutely lost under a confusion of sculptured curves and bosses, and scarcely a hint remains of the original idea that bellows are things to blow fires with, and not pedestals and backgrounds for sculpture.

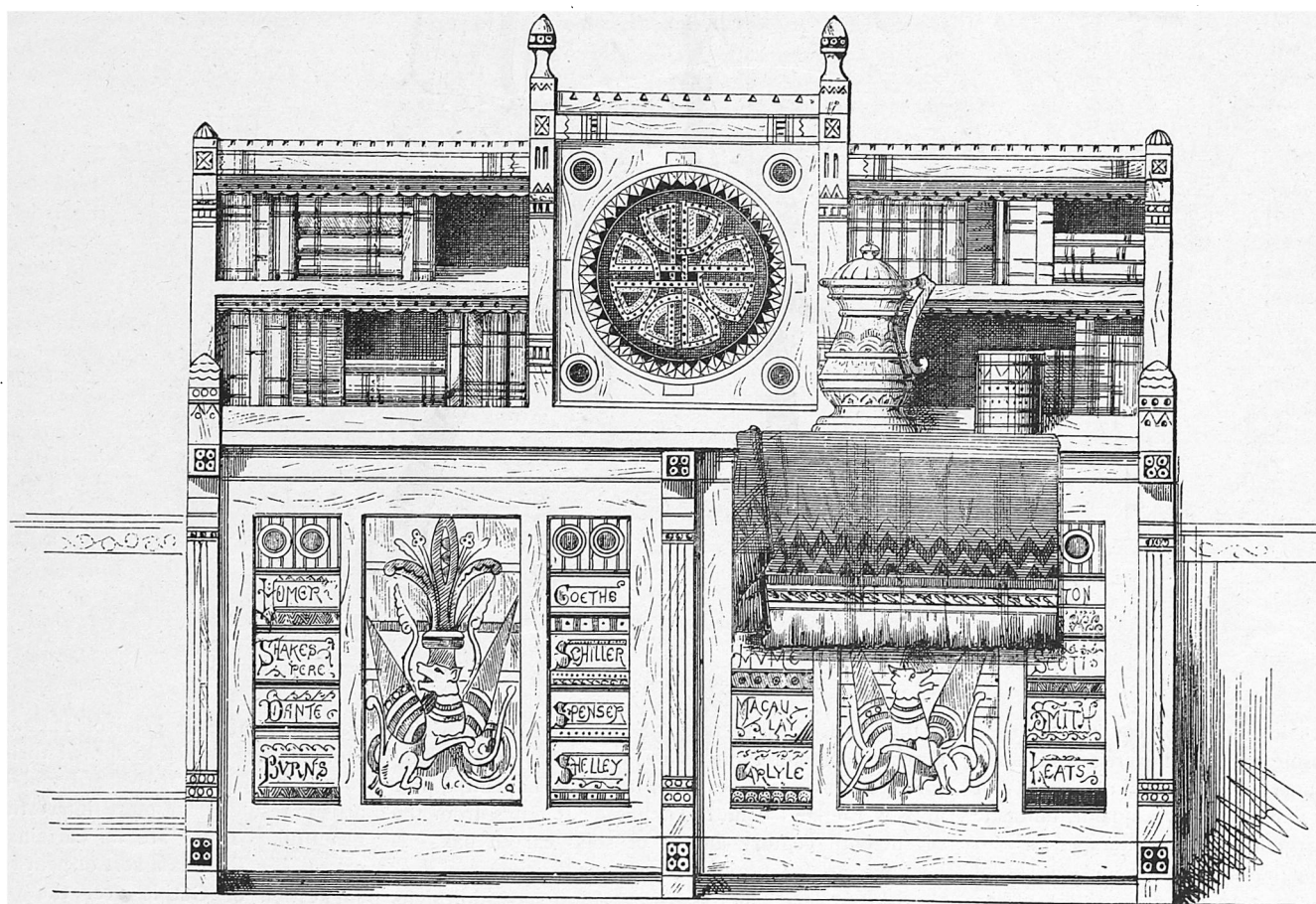
The illustration on the following page shows at the left a pair of bellows of about the middle of the sixteenth century. They are of chestnut wood carved with masks and mythical crea-

tures in high relief. The front, here represented, has a sort of heart-shaped design enclosing beside the central figure two dragon-tailed syrens. The nozzle is of brass, turned in rings, and issues from a lion's head,



DESIGN FOR A WARDROBE WITH CURTAINS. BY DR. DRESSER.

precisely the same as that of the "blowers" in use in Vermont and New Hampshire kitchens. The nozzle, however, is larger, the operator in the sculpture evi-



DESIGN FOR A BOOKCASE.

dently employing the instrument to winnow grain, rather than for the purpose for which bellows have probably been in use ever since the days of Tubal Cain. In the thirteenth century the form seems a little changed, less

It is less ostentatiously and massively weighted with the ornamentation under which nozzles afterward groaned—or wheezed—and in that respect is more “natural” than the one on the right which belongs to the same century, only a decade later.

In another pair of bellows, this time of the seventeenth century, one may see the increased floridity of the art of that period in miniature. These bellows are of walnut and the subject an “Adoration of the Shepherds,” the Virgin, St. Joseph, manger, child, shepherds, animals and all, in almost full relief! The “Adoration” has much the best of it and completely submerges the fact that the thing beneath is a simple pair of bellows. The sculptured forms themselves are ample and free, almost Venetian in style, although Florentine in fact, and the workmanship and modelling are quite equal to anything produced by the best artists of that time upon the more important objects of household and ecclesiastical use.

In the seventeenth century it was not uncommon to place family portraits upon these humble utensils. A curious pair of English bellows is preserved to our days from the time of the Commonwealth. The mounting is of brass and the upper surface is completely covered with beadwork representing scrolls and flowers surrounding the portrait, copied from one by Lely, of Mrs. Fleetwood, daughter of Cromwell, to which lady the pair belonged.

Some years ago I saw a pair of bellows in a peasant cot in Auvergne upon which some passing artist had exercised his skill. They were the commonest of their kind originally, but were made extremely uncommon by a quaint, fantastic arabesque of some large-leaved vine interspersed with bovine heads, and rough, touch-and-go likenesses of the children of the farm. In the very middle of the bellows was a portrait of the mother of the family, bare-legged and bare-footed, in the quaint peaked Auvergnat bonnet, with her distaff in her hand. Although the treatment was of the roughest, the touch was masterly, and the common domestic utensil was an object of real art. Except for the fact that the mother had just died and her portrait was therefore priceless, the

peasant owner would gladly have parted with the bellows for a few francs, and thus lost a work of genius, worthy some day of a place in any art museum. [The illustration on this page shows, in addition to the bellows, two foot-warmers and a brasier, all three of which are interesting examples of the application of art to common things during the Renaissance centuries. Not less interesting are the beautiful examples of artistic keys on the opposite page, which may suggest to some modern key-maker the possibility of improvement in his craft. With the exception of the curious antique specimen with the seal, at the bottom, they are all of forged iron, of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. ED. A. A.]

An even more humble yet artistic object is to be seen

In the same Old English section one finds another quaintly interesting thing from England's oaken age. This is also of carved oak and in architectural style and classic taste, the latter very much debased. At first sight it suggests a miniature temple without a pediment, or a Roman triumphal arch just one foot high. It is in reality merely a napkin press with screw and cross-bar, the latter resting upon elaborately sculptured columns with Ionic capitals. The purpose of its existence was to do work that the humble and unæsthetic flatiron does in our days, and its place was—as its magnificence declares—not in pantry or kitchen but on the monumental side-board or dresser of a dining-room.

Among these English oaks one finds also two wonder-

ful cradles, massive enough to rock infant giants and strong enough to lull a score of succeeding generations to sleep. One of them is carved in panels in very low relief and has at its head the date of the birth of the infant for whom it was—not so much made as built—October 14, 1641. It is as gloomy as a sarcophagus, and unless it was made gay with testers or curtains, the knobs for which are seen, it must have been a black shadow even in an oaken room. Its neighbor is royally rich with sculpture, and bedight with gold, and also dates from the seventeenth century. A fortune was evidently expended upon this cot of an earl's son, and the very fattest and best-

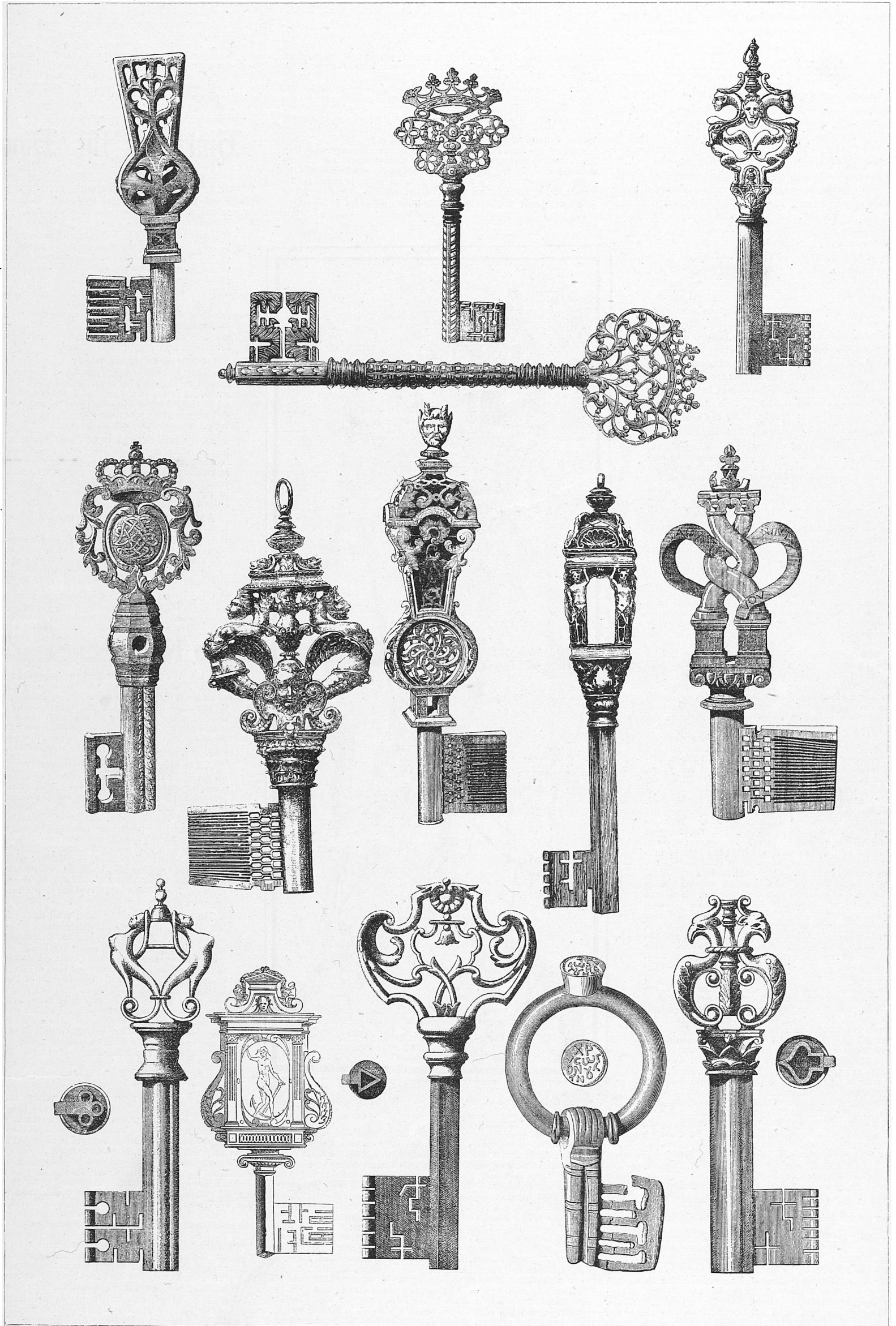


“ART IN COMMON THINGS.”

BRASIER, BELLOW, AND FOOT-WARMERS. (SEE PAGE 15.)

in the Old English section at South Kensington. This is such a common thing as a roller frame for such long roller towels as one sees upon frames of unpainted pine in New England country kitchens. It dates from the seventeenth century and is of solid carved oak. A beetling cornice projects over a wide frieze and over the oaken roller. The frieze is carved in vertical designs and in what would be quite Doric severity but for the mythic monsters on Tudor terminals at the corners. It is about two feet in height and between three and four in width, being apparently calculated to carry towels fit for dripping Titans. What a wondrous solid age of oak was that when even kitchen roller frames were made not for one generation but for a dozen!

nourished infantile genii of Pagan and Christian mythology were coaxed to sprawl their plump limbs and rotund bodies on foot-board and head-board, but the artistic result is far more interesting and curious than beautiful. There are no curtains or testers to this cradle, but there is a sort of pent-roof over its head, a suggestion of Gothic over the very ungothic genii. Three huge sculptured feathers tower above this roof, once richly gilded, but now, like the genii, rather the worse for wear. The sculptured and gilded foot-board rises much higher than the roof under which the high-born head reposed. It is to be noticed also that the curve of the rockers of both these cradles, previous to evident restorations, was much less than of cradles



"ART IN COMMON THINGS."

FORGED IRON KEYS, CHIEFLY OF THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.

(SEE PAGE 15.)

nowadays, which goes to show that the seventeenth century infant was put to sleep by gentle "jogs" rather than by the hemispherical motion of the present age.

MARGARET BERTHA WRIGHT.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.

EVERY year more and more attention is paid in this country to Christmas decorations in the church, the school, and the home. We have practically lost the old Puritan antipathy to this cheery practice of our English ancestors, and, whereas formerly the use of evergreens for interior adornment at Christmas tide was confined exclusively to the Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, it is becoming common now among all Christian denominations. It has gone even beyond this point in some parts of Europe, where it has ceased to have a purely religious significance. Indeed, it is not at all rare at this season to find Jewish homes in this country decorated with evergreens; and in such cases the Christmas-tree is almost as much a joy for the youth of that faith as it is for those of the faith of which it was originally a religious symbol.

As yet, however, we have hardly succeeded so well in the management of these Christmas decorations as have our trans-Atlantic cousins. In England, they are so important a feature in the church and the Sunday-school that a purely professional magazine like *The Journal of Decorative Art* finds it worth while, about this time of the year, to devote some space to the consideration of them. It is to this excellent publication that our readers are indebted for the varied array of Christmas designs found in one of our supplement sheets this month, and for the following practical suggestions, which we abridge from the columns of our contemporary:

In fixing on a scheme of decoration advantage should always be taken of any structural features, either to emphasize them or to give point to the decorations by bringing them into a harmonious contrast with the lines of the building. Each room has an individuality of its own, and no rigid fixed rule can be laid down, but a little careful study of the room will soon reveal the natural modes of decorating it.

Mottoes are one of the most valuable adjuncts in decoration. They should be legible, bold in character, consistent—that is, not two or three kinds of letters in one inscription—well formed, and well spaced out. Generally they are the weak spot of amateurs, and, if faulty, they greatly mar the success of any decorative undertaking. In producing them there are two or three alternatives. You can either buy the texts ready printed, which never have the value nor the appositeness of specially made ones, or you can employ professional talent to write them; or if there is no one on the decorating committee who can "set them out," you can purchase alphabets, and use them to mark out what is required. The employment of fantastically formed letters difficult to decipher is to be condemned. A small stop between each word in the centre of the paper, and a larger or more important ornament at the beginning and end of the motto, will add very much to the decorative appearance. If space is limited it is better to keep the letters well together, and separate the words. This gives clearness to the reading.

The positions the mottoes are to occupy is a question demanding some study. There can be no hard and fast rule laid down, as each room must be treated separately, but such positions as a frieze running round the room, the window heads, any arches there may be, are all natural places to be employed for this purpose.

Of course there are many kinds of letters for mottoes. No combination is better than vermilion capitals, black letters, and blue stops, on a white ground. This arrangement is always pleasing, especially if the body of the text be written in early English. If any of the decorators are clever with the pencil, a little ornament in outline, round the capital letter, will add to the value of the decoration; or it can be gilt, or a gold tablet may be laid in and the capital painted on; in either case, the letter must be outlined to separate it from the gold. This rule is inflexible. If for temporary purposes, bronze powders may be used instead of gold leaf, as the latter demands considerable expertness in the handling. Of all kinds of letters, written ones are certainly the best, and have the most character about them. Next to written ones come letters cut out of paper, as they are more within the compass of the average amateur decorator, and the making of them is greatly facilitated and simplified by the use of an alphabet. Letters cut out of cardboard or stiff drawing paper, and then covered with cotton wool, have their advocates, and for getting certain effects they are doubtless very good. Their best value, however, is obtained when they are fastened on a background of leaves. Another method of producing letters is to cut them out of cardboard, dissolve some gum tragacanth to the consistency of a jelly, then wash over the cardboard with the gum, and spread rice over it; this is repeated till the requisite thickness of coating is obtained, when they can be used white, or can be made to imitate coral, by being washed over with a solution of red sealing wax, dissolved in spirits of wine. Another way of using the cardboard letters is to cover them with leaves. These should be the smallest possible, otherwise the letters will be clumsy and unshapely.

Shields lend themselves admirably to the purposes of the decorator. They are decorative in their character, and offer an excellent field for devices of any kind; in front of corbels they make a natural and appropriate finish. In devices the decorator has a very wide field and command of resources; the most general and popular are monograms—either those of the church or school, or any of the sacred ones. Of the various methods for producing these, painting in color and gold is the best and most effective—indeed some of them can only be executed in this way—but very pleasing effects may be obtained with the simpler forms, as monograms, by working them in everlasting flowers of various hues and colors; if surrounded by evergreens, a good result is secured. To make these get some perforated zinc, cut it to the shape you require, and then insert the stalks of the flowers through the perforations and fasten them behind, showing the flowers at the front. Another method is to cut out cardboard or thin wood painted or papered over; coat this with a strong paste, made from half flour paste and half glue size; on this fix the flowers only, cutting off the stalks previous to fixing. Where ground and devices are both composed of evergreens, or evergreens and flowers, it is necessary to use a perforated zinc surface, or, if for large designs, open wire-work will do.

Wreaths are among the most important of all the materials which the decorator has to manipulate. Of the many ways of making them the following will generally be found to answer best: Stretch a strong cord tightly between two given points. For fastening the greenery to this use fine wire, which is far better than string, as there is not that danger of loosening to which twine is always liable, and a slight twist is sufficient to fasten it quite securely. Have the greenery at your left hand in small heaps, well assorted; pick up the leaves you want, dispose them equally round the rope, and then, with the wire in the right hand, fasten them on—of course always working backward down the rope—the last leaves by this means covering the fastenings of the previous ones. A great difference is found among wreath makers, some thinking that all that is required is to tie the leaves on the rope, and so they go on indiscriminately fastening leaves after leaves, without any regard to their equal distribution, with the result that one part is "starved"—you can see the rope as a thin line—while other portions are crowded to repletion. Care is demanded even in this apparently simple work, and it is worth the pains necessary to do it well. Additional value is given to the wreath by a judicious mingling of the various shades of green which are at the disposal of the decorator; attention to this often

these borders with single leaves, it is important that they should be all as near one size as possible. It is not necessary that they should be so exact as shown in the designs, but thousands may be selected quite near enough in size. In fastening the leaves in the position each has to occupy, thin strips of wood cut to the proper size may be covered with calico or colored paper, or else painted, and on these, the leaves may be fastened, with quarter-inch black tacks, the flowers and berries being secured by using strong hot glue; or the borders can be made upon calico or prepared canvas, and the leaves stitched on with green or black thread, in which case put the first stitch round the stem and then go twice or thrice across the body of the leaf.

Hints for the Home.

MADRAS muslins wrought with gold make the most exquisite sash window-curtains yet seen, excepting those of thin yellow silk with golden traceries relieved by touches of crimson and dark blue silk.

ALL articles of delicate, minute work should be on a level with, or not much above or below, the range of the eye. Chiffoniers with cupboards and shelves close to the floor for valuable and interesting ware are unsuitable, dangerous and inaccessible.

PAINTING on plush being so much more rapid than the tedious process of embroidery, and even more effective, it has rapidly come into use for screens. At the Woman's Exchange there is now a fine example of this work in a purplish plush screen ornamented with large branches of the magnolia in bloom.

ORDINARY brown paper such as is used for wrapping parcels is being employed in some of the best houses in England for covering the walls of the dining-room. The use of the neutral tinted cartridge paper is by no means infrequent in this country, and the effect is excellent, especially when the material is used in conjunction with a somewhat decorative frieze.

FOR small delicately carved Chippendale chairs in old mahogany, there are to be found lengths of rare brocade for use in covering. Among these, a lizard-green satin, shows bouquets of copper-tinted velvet flowers in relief, and a red and black shot silk has a design of pears in rich brocade upon it. Velvet peacock feathers are strewn over the old gold ground of another.

AMONG the new French materials is one charmingly suited to the wall hangings of a choice boudoir. It is a satin-faced stuff of pale greenish blue having garlands of roses painted in oil. Another of linen painted and gilded suggests the stuffs first introduced in the reign of Louis XIV., which, meant for window-curtains, were adopted for gowns by the beauties of the day.

CLOTH-OF-GOLD, gorgeous in sheen and substance, is imported for use with low-toned velvet or plush in portières. A New York decorator recently received an order from a rich iron-man in the interior of Pennsylvania for an entire set of window-curtains for his drawing-room, to be made of this lustrous fabric alone. Under protest, his order was ultimately carried out to the letter.

THE Westmeira carpet introduced by W. & J. Sloane is an improvement on the ordinary ingrain carpet, to which it bears, however, a sort of family likeness. As in the case of the plain red Indian matting, which we noticed some time ago as originally imported into this country by the same house, its introduction is a step toward enabling persons of moderate means to furnish their homes artistically, and is therefore to be commended.

AN unsightly, ill-proportioned recess, giving no depth for the reception of cabinet or table, may sometimes be used with advantage for books. Shelves of well-seasoned pine reaching from skirting-board to cornice might be introduced, and painted to agree with other woodwork in the room. A pretty if unusual look might be produced by projecting bracket-shelves, on one side, agreeing with the arrangements of the bookcase, the whole overhung by a well-wrought cornice. The brackets, filled with specimens of pottery, the shelves with interesting books, will together ably cloak a builder's errors. If preferred, the lower shelves, enclosed by doors with brass handles, form convenient cupboards for magazines and papers.

IN paper hangings and wall decorations there is a tendency to revert to the naturalistic style, which is to be deplored. Animals, vegetables, monstrous sunflowers, in all their gorgeous coloring, are being used to cover walls; fishes, sea-weeds, and plants on dados; masses of foliage and birds of monstrous size are here, there, and everywhere on the walls. The *Journal of Decorative Art*, taking note of the fact, says: "Artists who should know better are pandering to this false taste, and making our rooms resemble a greenhouse more than a dwelling-room. Birds and flowers painted upon panels we have no sort of objection to, but we do strongly object to a room being made to represent a pond or river on the dado, a forest on the wall-space, and a sky filled with birds. We object because they are out of place, incongruous, and utterly destructive of that repose which is an indispensable quality of all good decoration."

IT is curious to note to what foreign uses certain European and Asiatic goods are being applied in the decoration and furnishing of homes in this country. Messrs. W. & J. Sloane, for instance, import embroidered Turkish saddle-bags, which upholsterers buy, cut in two, and use for chair-backs; they sell the wide, flowing, fringed Albanian sleeves for lambrequins, and the richly-colored picturesque Albanian hoods for similar purposes. The writer noticed a pile of Egyptian camel's belts in the wholesale department, which, he learned, being of exceptionally strongly-woven cotton, and very good in color, are used by upholsterers for bindings. Red Turkish towelings are sold in large pieces to be made into curtains and portières. Turkish mosque rugs, sumptuously embroidered, continue to be much used for concealing unsightly doors. In this department of Oriental goods at Sloane's, there are all sorts of "odds and ends" of silk and velvet fabrics, which are eagerly bought up for the bullion embroidery on them; this is cut out and sewn on to other material, sometimes forming a chief ornament, around which is arranged fine original needlework.

GREAT comfort, especially in small houses, would be gained by making doorways between front and back rooms, not the old acquaintance of our drawing-room, folding-doors, using and making useless one side of both rooms; but a simple opening made in the most convenient part of the partition wall, not necessarily in the middle. Space, air, light, sun, view, may all be gained by this plan, as well as an extra chance for graceful folds of comfortable curtains.



DESIGN FOR A PANEL. "THE ELOPEMENT."

relieves what would otherwise be monotonous. For many purposes, such, for instance, as twining round columns, flat wreaths are preferable and more economical than round ones. A very good way of making them is to procure some worsted binding and then sew the leaves and berries on, taking care that the ends of each succeeding lot of leaves cover the stalks of their predecessors. When you have made your wreaths, arrange them so as to contrast with, or emphasize, the structural features. If you have to deal with a long plain wall, unrelieved with any feature whatever, and broken only by the window openings, first make a broad division between wall and ceiling, with a bold frieze, either ornamented with a design of leaves, or made a ground for a text or motto. Then connect the windows with another band, either a design or a text. These bands tying the windows together, ought to be placed just beneath the spring of the window head, and if the bands be bordered with evergreens, these should also be carried round the window head. You have now two broad bands running round the room. To break the stiffness of line which they inevitably present, droop festoons—those from the upper frieze full, to give dignity to their long sweep, and those underneath the window bands light, so as to lend themselves to the short acute curves.

In the supplement (Plate CCXXIV.) there is a series of borders, with the various leaves of evergreens as the motifs. In making